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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER

27 May 1980

MEMORANDUM

CUBA: Social Inequality

Like every Cuban Government the Castro regime has acknowledged the existence of racial discrimination under previous administrations but not under its own. Although Castro has moved society toward greater equality, racial and sexual discrimination persists--particularly within the political leadership.

Despite highly publicized progress toward social equality, the record of the Cuban Revolution is mixed. The commitment to social equality has led to considerable material improvement for blacks and mulattoes--who comprise at least 26 percent of the total population--primarily through widespread redistribution of income, expanded employment, and increased accessibility to public health services.* Racial minorities also have benefited from universal public education, and they no longer encounter blatant discrimination in the juridical process.

**Estimates of the proportion of the population that is black usually fall around 12 percent, but figures for mulattoes vary widely--sometimes ranging up to 51 percent.*

This memorandum was prepared by the Cuban Analytic Center of the Latin America Division of the Office of Political Analysis. It was requested by the National Security Council Staff, and reflects information available through 28 May 1980. Questions and comments may be addressed to Chief, Cuban Analytic Center,

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Much of this thrust toward equality came in the very early years of the Revolution, however, and few new efforts have since taken place. Color-based social inferiority persists in everyday life; organizations limiting their membership or their activities to a particular ethnic group are illegal.

The Revolution has done nothing to eliminate racial discrimination from political circles. Only 11 percent of the original 1965 Central Committee members were blacks or mulattoes--a ratio only slightly above their 9.4 percent representation in the 1945 National Congress--suggesting that the Revolution has failed to increase black and mulatto representation among the elite. When the present Central Committee was formed in 1975, the percentage of blacks and mulattoes dropped to 10.4 percent.

This racial imbalance could worsen rapidly in coming years if a significant number of non-whites are not added to the next Central Committee to be appointed at the Party Congress late this year. Most of the blacks and mulattoes are older than the average Central Committee member; in fact, half are over 65. As these older members die, non-white representation could decline markedly.

In the armed forces, spotty evidence suggests overrepresentation of non-whites at the troop level and underrepresentation at the officer level. Moreover, blacks in the Army are selected disproportionately for generally undesired service overseas--particularly in Africa. Cuban [redacted]

[redacted] expeditionary forces generate less local antagonism if they are predominately black.

Sexual Discrimination

The Castro regime's strong effort to reduce sexual discrimination has not extended to the upper echelons of the Cuban leadership. When labor shortages began to appear in the late 1960's, the government initiated new policies to facilitate the entry of women into the labor market. The establishment of day care centers and the official encouragement of women to work outside the home have gradually

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expanded the female work force. Approximately 17 percent of the total work force was female in 1953, and by 1975 this figure had risen to 28 percent. More than 40 percent of the labor union leadership is female.

No such change has occurred within the political hierarchy, however. Only 5 of the original 100-member Central Committee in 1965 were women. Although the absolute number of women in the Central Committee was slightly more than doubled in 1975, female representation increased to only 9 percent.

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